KNAVE OF HEARTS

ARTHUR SYMONS

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Symons, Arthur.
Knave of hearts.

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KNAVE OF HEARTS. 1894-1908.
BY ARTHUR SYMONS.

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TO RHODA.

You praise in me the verse that brings
A savour only life can give :
This book is what I thought of things
Before I had begun to live.

Life, the dice, has dropt into idle hands to be tossed :
Luckless hand, give me luck, before the game has been lost !
Life as a game of cards is shuffled with queens and kings :
Knave of hearts, be my friend, for you are the mover of things !

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The Brother of a Weed.

I.

I have shut up my soul with vehemence
Against the world, and opened every sense
That I may take, but not for love or price,
The world's best gold and frankincense and spice.
I have delighted in all visible things
And built the world of my imaginings
Out of the splendour of the day and night,
And I have never wondered that my sight
Should serve me for my pleasure, or that aught
Beyond the lonely mirror of my thought
Lived, and desired me. I have walked as one
Who dreams himself the master of the sun,
And that the seasons are as seraphim
And in the months and stars bow down to him.

II.

And I have been of all men loneliest,
And my chill soul has withered in my breast
With pride and no content and loneliness.
And I have said : To make our sorrow less
Is there not pity in the heart of flowers,
Or joy in wings of birds that might be ours ?
Is there a beast that lives, and will not move
Toward our poor love with a more lovely love ?
And might not our proud hopeless sorrow pass
If we became as humble at the grass ?
I will get down from my sick throne where I
Dreamed that the seasons of the earth and sky,
The leash of months and stars, were mine to lead,
And pray to be the brother of a weed.

III.

I am beginning to find out that there
Are beings to be pitied everywhere.
Thus when I hear, at night, an orphaned sheep
Crying as a child cries, how can I sleep ?
Yet the night-birds are happy, or I seem
To hear them in the hollow of a dream,
Whispering to each other in the trees,
And through the window comes a leaping breeze
That has the sea-salt in it. When I hear
Crying of oxen, that, in deadly fear,
Rough men, with cruel dogs about them, drive
Into the torture-house of death alive,
How can I sit under a tree and read
A happy idle book, and take no heed ?

IV.

Why is not sorrow kinder to all these
That have short lives and yet so little ease?
Life is but anxious fear to lambs and hens,
And even the birds are enemies of men's
Because they rob a cherry-tree; the mole
Cannot be left in quiet in his hole
Though he is softer than a velvet gown;
The caterpillar is soon trodden down
Under a boot's ignorant heel, though he
Is woven finer than old tapestry.
The worm is close and busy and discreet,
The foe of no man living: no man's feet
Spare him, if he but crawl into the sun.
Who can be happy, while these things are done?

V.

Why are the roses filled with such a heat,
And are so gaudy and riotously sweet,
When any wind may snap them from the stem
Or any little green worm canker them ?
Why is the dawn-delivered butterfly
So arrogant, knowing he has to die
Before another dawn has waked his brother ?
Why do the dragon-flies outshoot each other
With such an ardour, knowing that the noon
Will put away his shining arrows soon ?
Why is the seed that, having got to corn,
Must come to bread, so eager to be born ?
Why is it that the joy of living gives
Forgetfulness to everything that lives ?

The Picture.

O, if I did not love you with a love
Older than sight, this should have been enough
Seen once, and in a picture, so, to dream
A lifetime over ; for a thing you seem
Made of the wilfulness of all delight,
Happy as singing, grave with joy : the light
Soars from your shoulder to envelop you,
Wing-like, and the desire of flight shines through.
I would have lived, for your sake, in a sleep,
Shut from all outer faces, nestling deep
In the dim heart of dreams your secret face.
Time would have waked me at our meeting-place
Before the years of the world were at an end,
Because I waited. Now, O love, O friend,
My help, my hope, my more than memory,
There is one thing time cannot take from me :
That I have known you, not in dreams, but warm
With life and wild with love, and felt the storm
Of pulses panting to your finger-tips,
And heard your heart beat naked at my lips.
Have I not hungered, have I not been fed,
For love's sake, love, with that immaculate bread
Which is the heavenlier manna of my drouth,
Your body, sweet as manna to the mouth
Which now gives God thanksgiving without shame ?
O flame of love, and light within the flame,
And pure in body and soul as that desire
Which is in heaven the light, on earth the fire,
Come, for your picture calls to me, O come

Ere longing lapse into a martyrdom ;
Come, in what darkest veil you please, or white
Beyond all whiteness in your body's light ;
And bid me kneel and kiss your feet, or give
My body and soul at last their leave to live.
Yet, of all gifts, I dare desire, you pour
Yet freelier forth, I will not love you more ;
Nor, if your will withhold me happiness,
I will not, for I cannot, love you less.

Unattained Delight.

O unattained, imaginable delight,
To be the arms of rest to you all night,
All the long, swift, uncounted, endless hours !
And for this heaven past hoping to be ours
Simply as sleep, and for kind sleep to come
To both our breathings, like a quiet home !
Scarce I dare think, for fear, of happiness,
Lest being known, I find it to be less
Than that I dreamed ; and scarcely I dare dream
Even of sleep, lest that too, coming, seem
Less than perfection of an ecstasy.
I call my flying thoughts all back to me,
Soothing their wings, and murmuring soft words
To still them, all my flying thoughts like birds.
I wait, veiling my eyelids ; I control
Even hope, and the impatience of the soul.

Beauty's Strangeness.

The world is full of you : I wander in vain ;
I cannot lose you : for you come again,
Here in deep eyes, and there in wandering hair,
Or mournful cheeks ; and always you are there
When I begin to dream of some escape
From dreams of you : for all dreams take your shape.
You will not lose me : know, and be consoled,
If you desire, as you desired of old,
Still to be loved when you have ceased to love.
These eyes remember, and those see you move
Wherever beauty's strangeness comes to keep
My weary hope from the relief of sleep.

Love in Action.

How could, how should I tell you of
That first beginning of our love
In action ? rather let me tell
How Eve was formed or Adam fell.
A mighty adoration came
Out of a smile to be a flame,
And the first breathings of desire
Were quickly blown into a fire
That took on both our bodies such
An intimate hold it seemed to touch
The soul of either to the quick,
And christen our vows catholic.
Then, the beginning being over,
There was no more but love and lover,
And of that eternal minute
Know but that life and death were in it.
Only, that being passed, I seem
Half to remember from a dream
Her panting breath across my eyes
And the whole amorous breast of sighs,
Her damp cheek and abandoned hair,
And mouth relaxed to that despair
Which is the shipwreck of each sense
In overflooding indolence ;
And, in no dream, but even as one
Who wakes out of oblivion,
The quieting of aching throes,
Into a rapture of repose,
When eyes re-open and lips close.

The Wind.

Last night, lying awake, I heard the wind
Going down the leafy valley to the sea,
And tearing at the thatch with many hands.
And I lay still, knowing that you were there,
Dreaming kind dreams that laugh themselves awake
With morning; and I felt the irresistible
Enemy, the wind of multitude, the hands
That tear and batter at my rest, and drag
My soul out of its lonely hiding-place,
Go by; and I lay still, knowing you were there,
And hearing in the dark your tranquil breath
Evenly through the tumult; and your peace
Has never brought more strength to me than when
Last night, lying awake, I heard the wind.

The Streets.

I loved the streets because
I feared myself and sought
In the crowd's hurry a pause
And sanctuary from thought.

My sanctuary is such
Now that I dwell with love
I cannot have too much
Of self or thought enough.

And my tired pilgrim feet
Have no more need to roam :
Why seek in every street
That face which is my home ?

Fear.

My love makes me afraid,
For when I am alone,
My fate being my own,
I have all myself in aid.

But with yourself you bring
Fear, and he will not quit
So dear and exquisite
And perishable a thing.

The certainty that held
Before my breast a targe,
Now you are in my charge
Shrivels, and is dispelled.

I cast about you arms
Weak with solicitude
That were in solitude
Invulnerable to harms.

And I go wondering
If fear will ever quit
So dear and exquisite
And such a priceless thing.

The Spirit and the Bride.

If, when the Spirit and the Bride say Come !
I yet be found lingering by the way,
Even as I linger while it is to-day,
Wait thou, my God ! although I journey from
My home on earth and from thy other home,
I will remember at the last, and say :
Thou who wast near when I was far away,
Take me : the Spirit and the Bride say Come !

Thou hast held me in the hollow of thy hand,
And I have fought against thy power ; thou hast kept
Thy watch over my spirit while it slept,
Dreaming against thy wisdom ; I have planned
Ways of escape, but thou has overswept,
Like loving water, all my dykes of sand.

The Twelve-Thorned Crown.

Wounded for our transgression, she must bear
The crucifying, and the twelve-thorned crown,
And lay her secret pride shamefully down,
That man may live, who is her lord and heir,
Son of her travail, father of her pains,
For his delight a bleeding sacrifice;
Nor will those wounds wounded but once suffice:
She suffers, but the twelve-thorned crown remains.

Woman, when in the sacrament I take
The bread, your body, and the wine, your kiss,
I bid my body and soul remember this,
And humble themselves proudly for your sake,
And for the sacred blood that you have shed,
And for the shame those innocent pangs yet bring:
I do adore the crown of suffering
That sets a crown of glory on your head.

Lesbia in Old Age.

You see these shrunken arms, this chin,
A sharp bone wrapped about with rags
Of scrawled and wrinkled parchment skin ;
This neck now puckered into bags
Was seamless satin at the first ;
And this dry broken mouth a cup
Filled up with wine for all men's thirst ;
This sodden hair was lifted up
In coils that as a crown were curled
About a brow that once was low,
As any woman's in the world ;
And these two eyes of smouldering tow
That scarcely light me to this hearth
Were as two torches shaken out
To be a flame upon the earth.
What is it that he said about
Beauty I stole, to be my own,
All beauty's beauty ? Look at this :
Finger by finger, to the bone,
His lips and teeth would bite and kiss
These joints of these abhorred hands,
These cheeks that were not always thus ;
What was it that he said of sands
And stars that could not count for us
Our kisses ? Let us love and love,
My Lesbia : yes, and I shall live,
A hungering, thirsting shadow of
That love I gave and could not give.
I gave him pleasure, and I sold

To him and all men ; he is dead,
And I am infamous and old,
And yet I am not quieted.
Take off your curses from my soul :
Can not Catullus pity me
Although my name upon his scroll
Has brought him immortality ?

Hallucination.

Why is it that I see
Her burning web of hair ?
It burns and strangles me.
No, there is nothing there
But sunlight and cool air.

And yet I feel it, soft
And warm ; and now the wind
Brandishes it aloft.
But is it round my mind
Or round my body twined ?

I have a deadly fear
When I but think upon
That evil heart in her
Which for more power has gone
Into her hair alone.

She has an angel's face,
He will not enter there ;
But for his hiding-place,
His fortress and his lair,
Has gone into her hair.

There the beast laughs and sits
And twines his web to mesh
The soul into the wits,
The heart out of the flesh :
He twines his web afresh.

And I shall never know
If this too shining thing
The wind blows to and fro,
Mocking and comforting,
Is any living thing.

I know that I desire
With rapture and despair
To snatch the web of fire
Burning out of the air
And perish in her hair.

The Snake-Soul.

Miriam and I slept head by head,
Each alone in the harem bed ;
Wife though she was whom the Emir had wed,
He had taken a Jewess in her stead.

Miriam, when her soul was awake,
Had the dead eyes of a snake ;
Miriam's body would sway and take
The secret sliding ways of a snake.

I who had tended her in her pride,
I lay in the bed at her bedside ;
She never spoke and she never sighed
But lay as dead as if she had died.

Not a breath in her mouth would wake
That coiled slumber of the snake :
Where had her soul gone forth to take
Hate with poison of the snake ?

There was a cry, deathly wild.
And Miriam wakened up and smiled,
Cold, and quiet as a child :
I only knew that Miriam smiled.

Voices cried through the door: "Awake :
Her heart is bitten through by a snake ! "
" Let them come and let them take,
Here," Miriam said, " the snake ! "

The Serpent.

To Sarojini Naidu.

What is it, Helen, to be wise,
What is it to have everything,
When some old secret in your eyes
Kings and wise men are questioning ?
Wisdom is heavy as a crown,
And kings desire to lay that down.

Is it the serpent, Lilith's spouse,
That before good and evil were
Guarded the apple in the boughs
For Eve to take, and after her
All women that like Eve will take
And eat their sustenance from the snake ;

Is it the serpent that looks through
Those eyes of death and wantonness ?
Wise men and kings, beholding you,
Shrink up to dust and nothingness.
Is it the serpent in your eyes
That is still lord in paradise ?

For Le Penseur of Rodin.

(To be erected in Paris before the Pantheon.)

Out of the eternal bronze and mortal breath,
And to the glory of man, me Rodin wrought ;
Before the gates of glory and of death
I bear the burden of the pride of thought.

On Three Drawings of Rodin.

Here are four women : look into each face.
The first one of the four is but a dream,
And she is Beauty ; next to her there seem
To lie two spawns of Satan in embrace.
And lastly Life, with a tremendous gesture,
Turns, and prepares to cast aside her vesture.

This is the triptych of three unknown things :
The dream, and the descent into deep hell,
And out of hell the fair ascent of wings.
These are three secrets which one man can tell
Because no wind of heaven shall efface
The smoke of hell from his effulgent face.

The Mystery of Judas and Satan.

(*Scaena. Suspendo in oleastro* JUDAS. *Apparet* SATHANAS.)

SATAN.
Judas, wherefore hangest thou
On this pale wild olive bough ?

JUDAS.
Many hundred years have I
Hung there; but I may not die.

SATAN.
Thy bought soul give back to me
For thy ransom from the tree.

JUDAS.
Leave me, Satan ; get thee gone,
That my soul may thirst alone.

SATAN.
Judas I will quench its drouth :
Pass it through thine aching mouth.

JUDAS.
Never shall this soul accurst
From its flaming prison burst
Through the lips sealed up with drouth
That kissed Jesus on the mouth.

[*Repente* SATHANAS *in fumo exspirat.*

The Dialogue of the Soul and Body.

The Soul.
Sinful Body, now repent :
For one moment thou art lent
To me, the Soul, to occupy :
Body, repent before thou die !

The Body.
I the Body thee permit
As a guest to enter it ;
I the Master am and I
Mine own house do occupy.

If thou wouldst not have me sin,
Soul, why didst thou enter in ?
If I would a while carouse
Thou canst not shut me from my house.

If for my desire I bring
Some fair unreluctant thing
Who, being without guile,
Pleasureth me a certain while,

Thou, the Soul, must neighbour her,
And to her presence not demur ;
For She and She and She is spouse,
Ever welcome in my house.

One fair chamber and one bed
Where we nightly so re-wed ;
Nakedness with nakedness
Casting off the body's dress.

Fearful, fair and fond delights,
Lustful dawns and wanton nights,
Every dear forbidden thing
The mind can to the body bring,

Each several rapture when the flesh
Wakes and dies and wakes afresh,
Ever joying in the glory
Of those that know Love's Purgatory.

Bitter, chiding Soul, forgive
The Body that it thus do live.

Japan.

To Yone Noguchi.

The butterfly,
The frailest of things,
Has colours that dye
With jewels its wings.

It is a flower,
A mist, a breath ;
Its life of an hour
Rejoices in death.

There went forth a word,
And the winged bright Japan
Had the heart of a sword
With the soul of a fan.

Tanagra.

To Cavalieri dancing.

Tell me, Tanagra, who made
Out of clay so sweet a thing ?
Are you the immortal shade
Of a man's imagining ?
In your incarnation meet
All things fair and all things fleet.

Arrow from Diana's bow,
Atalanta's feet of fire,
Some one made you long ago,
Made you out of his desire.
Waken from the sleep of clay
And rise and dance the world away.

Tristan's Song.

If this be love I die,
I die of hoping love,
That will not hence remove,
Nor will not all deny.

His sharp and bitter dart
Is fast within my side ;
Come, my old courage, hide
Thy death within thy heart.

I will not shrink although
This death in love there be :
She whom I love is she
Who is through love my foe.

At the Morgue.

I am afraid of death to-day,
For I have seen the dead,
Where, in the Morgue, they lie in bed,
And one dead man was laughing as he lay.

And that still laughter seemed to tell,
With its inaudible breath,
Of some ridiculous subterfuge of death,
Some afterthought of heaven or hell,

The last and the lost mystery,
Which, being known, had bred
Such cynic laughter in the dead,
A laughter that outlived mortality.

Ah, mortal to mere mortal breath,
This ultimate farce of things:
To have heard the laughter from the wings,
The coulisses of the comedy of death!

Villa Borghese.

In this dim alley of the ilexes
I walk in a delicious loneliness.
The plaintive water of the fountain drips
Like silence speaking out of a God's lips,
And like chill silence visible, I see
A faint smoke breathing upward mistily
Where dead leaves rise in incense, their sweet death,
Toward the frail life of dying leaves. The breath
Of that decay which is more delicate
Than the white breath of spring, the lonely state
Of lilies breathing in a quiet place,
Sweetens the air. I feel against my face,
Moist, stealthy, blown from where the leaves are thinned,
The kisses of the winter, in pale wind.

At Sant' Onofrio.

To the Princess Doria.

Our Lady of the violets,
That grew among the woods of heaven,
Before they pined to be your eyes,
Grown human in the sharp regrets
That shine as sweetly as the seven
Swords of Our Lady of the skies ;

Princess, I see you stand to-day
Smiling among your pallid folk
That on God's service come and go ;
Beholding, as from far away,
The sins of Rome go up like smoke,
Silent at Sant' Onofrio.

Grey Hours : Naples.

There are some hours when I seem so indifferent ; all things fade
To an indifferent greyness, like that grey of the sky ;
Always at evening-ends, on grey days ; and I know not why,
But life, and art, and love, and death, are the shade of a shade.
Then, in those hours, I hear old voices murmur aloud,
And memory forgoes desire, too weary at heart for regret ;
Dreams come with beckoning fingers, and I forget to forget ;
The world as a cloud drifts by, or I drift by as a cloud.

Stormy Night : Naples.

The night was loud with wind, and the wind shone
With heavy feet trampling the dust-grey sea ;
The hill of fire obscure continually
Flowered to a rose, that flickered, and was gone.

All night I heard the wind go to and fro,
Scattering the petals of that rose of flame ;
With dawn a new rose wonderfully came,
I heard the dust-grey waters come and go.

All night those voices moaned about my mind
(O vain desire ! desire of vain repose !)
The wind that was in terror of that rose,
The sea that was in terror of the wind.

Easter Night : Naples.

To-night I pity all poor human souls
For being human. This miraculous night,
When the white-clouded full moon aureoles
A space of shining water with pure light,

This Paschal night after the mandolins,
The organs, and the incense, and the wine,
The day of the redemption of man's sins,
This joyous day, and of all days divine,

Why is it that I see a long white host
Of bubbles floating on an idle breath,
And those bright colours that bedeck them most
Beckoning nearest to their soaring death ?

Venice.

MINUET : *The Masque of the Ghosts.*

The coloured dancing shadows creep
Like ghosts from a mysterious street ;
And Venice wakens out of sleep
At the sound of their feet.

Here Pulcinello solemn stands,
And the pale patient Pierrot shakes
His shivering shanks and starving hands,
And Columbine awakes.

She has forgotten him, and gay,
Runs past him towards the colonnades
Where the immortal masquers stay,
Unhappy shades.

Their aching hearts beneath their masks
Palpitate like caught butterflies ;
They move in their appointed tasks
With disappointed eyes.

The music of a minuet
Beckons to their unwilling feet ;
The light loves, they would fain forget,
The stately measures slowly beat.

Dear disappointed shades of joy
That lived merrily without thought,
Your hearts are turned into a toy
To be tossed and caught.

Venice, the tyrant of the years,
Commands you to perpetuate,
With listless feet and weary tears,
The sunken splendours of her state.

Venice.

Water and marble and that silentness
Which is not broken by a wheel or hoof;
A city like a water-lily, less
Seen than reflected, palace wall and roof,
In the unfruitful waters motionless,
Without one living grass's green reproof;
A city without joy or weariness,
Itself beholding, from itself aloof.

Nerves of Night.

The stealthy and irresistible clouds are alone
With earth and sky ; hark, twilight flutterings,
The hurry and sigh of the bat's demure dim wings ;
See, a star that shakes through a cloud, and is gone.
Now there is silence, and only light enough
To see the dark by ; hush, in the trembling grass,
The breathing of night ; nay, hush, what tremors pass
Through the nerves of night to the trembling stars above ?

Song.

Think of nothing but the day :
Yesterday is dead and gone,
And to-morrow will not stay
Longer than another one.

Why should Time, that cannot mar
One triumphant rose's scent,
Stint our joys, because they are
Blossoms, fair not permanent ?

Any joy like any flower
Has its instant blossoming :
How can even Time have power
Over either perfect thing ?

Caution for all Lovers.

When I made love to you the other day,
And you were kind because the sky was blue,
How was it I remembered what to say?
You, when to come in answer to your cue?

I but repeat out of a tattered scrip
The words an author, long forgotten, wrote;
And you out of his stage-directions quote
The kisses that I find upon your lip.

A Song of Love and Time.

Nothing in the world is sure,
Do not be afraid of love :
The earth's waters shall remove,
The earth's hills shall not endure.

Why should love hurt over-long ?
Time the strength of love shall break.
Of a little sorrow make
Endless pleasure in a song.

How should love outlast a rhyme ?
Helen died, the deathless Greek.
Time is strong and love is weak :
Do not be afraid of time.

Roses.

There is a perfumed garden that I know,
A garden all of winding white-rose ways,
Where only roses blow,
Where only memory strays ;
And down whose delicate pale alleys,
And warm delicious valleys,
I have oft wandered for enchanted days :
There is a perfumed garden where my heart would go.

Within the white-rose garden that I love
There are two roses that I love the best,
Set in the midst thereof :
White roses are the rest.
And each cool dewy blossom that uncloses
Is redder than red roses.
Within the white-rose garden of her breast
To kiss the rosy-petalled roses that I love !

Fauvette.

Shall we remember both, Fauvette,
With all the memories of both,
A certain memory one were loth
To fancy either should forget ?

You danced like any Sainte Nitouche,
In that incredible quadrille ;
Your virgin cheeks without a *mouche*
Blushed at the lifting of a frill.

And through your grave and steady eyes
No conscious, curious tremors ran
Of naughty knowledge, nor surprise
At all the naughtiness of man.

But after, when we must have had
That little converse I recall,
When I was mystically mad,
And you a wholesome animal,

Well, though your cheeks without a *mouche*
Could scarcely boast of blushes still,
And that prim air of Sainte Nitouche
Had left you with the last quadrille,

At least you wondered then ! your eyes,
Those grave and steady eyes, began
To open in extreme surprise
At the extravagance of man.

Ah, you were sane and I was mad ;
Were it not better, after all,
To have left the soul apart, and had
The savour of the animal ?

Who knows ? Except that one were loth
To fancy either could forget
A certain memory of both,
Both should remember long, Fauvette.

Peau d'Espagne.

Insinuating monotone,
Why is it that you come to vex,
With your one word, a heart half grown
Forgetful of you, scent of sex ?

With that warm overcoming breath
You flow about me like the sea,
And down to some delicious death
Your waves are swift to hurry me.

It is the death of her desire ;
The prelude of sleep-heavy sighs,
The pulsing ecstasy of fire,
The wet lips and the closing eyes.

And, Peau d'Espagne, I breathe again,
But, in this ultimate eclipse
Of the world's light, I breathe in vain,
The flower's heart of the unseen lips.

Peau d'Espagne, scent of sex, that brings
To mind those ways wherein I went,
Perhaps I might forget these things
But for that infamy, your scent !

The Lovely Worm of Hell.

The malady of love is in my bones,
It burns me to the marrow like a fire,
And I desire the death of my desire.

There is a little tongue of fire that moans
Shudderingly in every leaping vein,
And my pain longs for an acuter pain.

Beauty of woman, savour of her kiss,
The mystery of love that turns to be
The bite of an eternal cruelty,

Did God send woman unto man for this,
That he, ere death, should know in her full well
The torment of the lovely worm of hell?

After the Sacrifice.

So the child turned upon her homeward way
Beneath the dying day,
She and her dead, the death that never dies.
The memory in her eyes
Fought with the drowning and unfathomed dread
Whose waves engulfed her head.
She moved across a dream of some red night
That ached against her sight,
And if the night were past, or yet to come,
She knew not, going home.
She only saw her mother, and her hold
Was harder on the gold.
She clutched it and the memory of it came
About her like a flame.
And so she made her solitary way
Home, 'neath the dying day:
Only the agony of tears unwept
Beneath her eyelids slept.

In the Strand.

With eyes and hands and voice convulsively
She craves the bestial wages. In her face
What now is left of woman ? whose lost place
Is filled with greed's last eating agony.
She lives to be rejected and abhorred,
Like a dread thing forgotten. One by one
She hails the passers, whispers blindly ; none
Heeds now the voice that had not once implored
Those alms in vain. The hour has struck for her,
And now damnation is scarce possible
Here on the earth : it waits for her in hell.
God ! to be spurned of the last wayfarer
That haunts a dark street after midnight ! Now
Shame's last disgrace is hot upon her brow.

On Reading of Women Rioting for their Rights.

What is this unimaginable desire
In women's heads? Would you come down again
From where you are, to be no more than men?
Why is it that you call it getting higher
To slip with each step deeper into the mire?
You would be even as men are? Is it then
So clean a thing to be a citizen
And take a dirty daily wage for hire?

Man has long since laid up his soul in pawn,
And lent his body out for a machine;
He has long since forgot that he has been
The master, not the servant, of the dawn:
But now the woman fights for leave to ply
A friendly muckrake with him in his sty.

Bal Masqué.

Is it an Arabian Night?
Here's a turban with such pearls
As none but white Circassian girls
Wear in some sullen Sultan's sight.
Yet, below us, brief and bright,
What is this living wheel that twirls
With what flounces and what curls
To weave the painted web of light?

All the world's a dream or doubt,
Tie our senses to a swing;
Who is it that pulls the string
Mounts us high or casts us out?
Lord and lady, lass and lout,
Still the puppets sway and sing:
What is there in anything
To be glad or sad about?

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Faint Love.

(For a Fan by Charles Conder.)

Beauty I love, yet more than this I love
Beautiful things ; and, more than love, delight ;
Colours that faint ; dim echo far above
The crystal sound, and shadow beyond sight.

For I am tired with youth and happiness
As other men are tired with age and grief ;
This is to me a longer weariness :
Sadly I ask of each sad mask's relief

For gardens where I know not if I find
Autumn or spring about the shadowy fruit,
And if it is the sighing of the wind
Or if it is the sighing of the lute.

The Tarot Cards.

The Tarot cards that rule our fates
Slip through her hands like shaken sands ;
Her charmed sight upon them waits,
She holds the future in her hands ;
Her fingers can unlatch the gates
That open on forbidden lands.

Under the golden kerchief lies
The mischief of the East ; she sees
Beyond our eyesight with her eyes
That are the moons of sorceries ;
The soul before them lives and dies
Through countless immortalities.

The shaken cards upon the grass,
Like signs of good and evil things,
Through her obedient fingers pass,
Crowned devils and bright purple kings,
Sad forms in hell, and Sathanas
Rejoicing in his serpent-stings.

Rise up from the accursed pool,
Lest the grass wither where you lie ;
Fold up the Tarot cards that rule
Our fates, and put your witchcraft by :
Only a madman or a fool
Would will to know his hour to die.

London : Midnight.

I hear, in my watch ticking, the vast noise
Of Time's hurrying and indifferent and inarticulate voice ;
I hear, in my heart beating, the loud beat
As of the passing of innumerable feet ;
And afar and away, without, like a faint sea,
The sighing of the city is borne to me
Out of the dumb, listening night ;
And the immeasurable patience and the infinite
Weariness of the world's sorrow rise and cry
Out of the silence up to the silent sky
In that low voice of the city,
So passionately and so intolerably crying for pity,
That I wonder at the voice of Time, indifferent, apart,
And at the lonely and sorrowful and indifferent voice of my heart.

To my Mother.

When I bethink me how my life goes by,
How gaily idle, what a painted thing,
In revelry, and mirth, and wantoning,
Desiring but the moments as they fly,
And those fleet pleasures that are born to die
Even at the instant of their blossoming ;
How of myself myself would fain be king,
Yet what a sport of Fortune's winds am I ;

Then, Mother, I recall that blessed load,
Half prayers, half hopes, you bore : to have a son
Steadfast in honour, stablished in the faith,
His life a calm preparedness for death.
See, Mother, this is all that I have done
With life you gave me to give back to God.

The New Life.

O I have loved, and I must love no more.
Poor fool, my heart, thou canst not enter twice,
Not twice nor by another door,
The only Paradise.

—Yet what is this that brims me up again
To the forgotten limits of delight ?
—Thy fancy : it is fond and vain.
Yet this is infinite.

—If this be love, thou hast not loved till now.
—Have I not loved ?—Thou sayest.—Yea, and died.
—Was it not love that died, not thou ?
—Thou knowest if love abide.

—Tell me thyself, then, what hath come to thee.
—I know not ; but I heard a voice that said
Arise ! and I arose ; and see,
I live, who had been dead !

Summer in Spring.

When summer, come before its hour,
With heady draughts of ripe July
Drugs the wild April, young in flower,
And suns reel drunken in the sky ;

These lovely useless London days
In which the sunshine, warm in vain,
Is thickened into hateful haze
Or spilt upon the streets, like rain :

To think how, far on fields of green,
The winds are happy in the grass,
And the first bees begin to glean
The honey of the hours that pass !

Song.

Why did I pick a nut in the wood
That had a bittter core ?
Now I will go into the wood
No more.

Only if they come to you and say,
Come, nutting-time is now ?
I will not tell them of the bitter nut
That hangs for me on a bough.

Song to the Bride.

How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights !
As the apple upon the bough
Thy sweetness invites.
A fountain of gardens, a well
Of water alone ;
A pomegranate fruit and the smell
Of Lebanon.
Awake, O North wind, and blow
On my garden, O South !
What spices are there that outflow
From the kiss of her mouth ?
O vineyard, she is thy vine :
What are aloes and myrrh ?
Her love is much better than wine :
What is like unto her ?

Regret.

Why is it that my heart is asleep, and no dreams wake,
And my thoughts like smoke in the wind are scattered and shake,
And there is no pain in my heart where it ought to ache ?

I have forgotten what it was to weep or carouse ;
The lamps are lighted, the curtains drawn, in the house ;
I have forgotten the crying of birds, the shaking of boughs.

Be content, my heart ; forget these things ; they are vain.
What dream once dreamed can ever be dreamed again ?
What is better for a heart than to sleep and be out of pain ?

The Windmill.

The day is enough for delight ;
Why, as I lie on the grass,
And watch the clouds as they pass,
Do I reason of wrong and right ?

Only to be, and the breath
I take is all that I need,
Were I but as the flower and weed
That live without thought of death.

But death and right and wrong,
As the windmill turns on the hill
Turn like a burden still
That I cannot cast out of my song.

Nero.

Two Dramatic Scenes.

I.

NERO.
I am tired of talking with so wise a man,
And my kind folly waits. Leave us alone.

SENECA.
I would go quicker if I were not old.

[*Goes out slowly.*

NERO.
Do you hear, Acte ? he is old and wise ;
Foolish old men forget that they were young,
But Seneca remembers. Kiss me, child,
And tell me what you think of.

ACTE.
Nothing now.

NERO.
A moment since ?

ACTE.
Your mother.

NERO.
What of her ?

Acte.
I fear the queen your mother, for her eyes
Are like a cat's eyes, made out of green fire,
And frighten me. When I was in my home
In Smyrna, where tall ships from far-off seas . . .

Nero.
Tell me of Smyrna: the East waits for me,
I am to be the King of all the East.
Are there not wildernesses, groves of palms,
Camels, and pools of water?

Acte.
There is light.

Nero.
I hunger for a kingdom in the sun;
Rome is too narrow; Rome grows old, I want
A great white ancient city always young.
I must break down the barriers of these hills.

Acte.
No, no. I know you would not leave your hills,
So gentle I could stroke them with my hand,
For all the Asian deserts.

Nero.
You have come
Out of a boundless land to be a slave,
Yet you love Rome.

Acte.
I love to be a slave.

Nero.
Why do you fear my mother ?

Acte.
For her eyes.
In Smyrna we fear all that have green eyes.

Nero.
You do not fear Octavia ?

Acte.
She is grave
And gentle, though she will not look on me ;
She is, as I am, humble in her heart ;
I would not have you love her : no, and yet
I would die to make her happy.

Nero.
You would die
To make Octavia happy ? If you died
You would make Octavia happy.

Acte.
Do you think,
I do not think her, so unkind ; but then
She loves you. It is hard not to be loved.

Nero.
You love me, Acte ?

Acte.
As I love the light.

Nero.
Child, child, if I had not been made a King,
Or if I were my master, and a King,
If they would let me, Burrhus, Seneca,
My mother, all my masters, by all the gods,
I think that I could love you well enough,
Acte!

Acte.
I am your slave. I am content.

Nero.
When I shall have my kingdom in the East,
You shall sit down beside me on a throne;
We'll rule the world with songs; I mean to rule
The world with songs, because I was made King,
And there's no King can make a poet, and I
Was born that poets may be Kings of Kings.

Acte.
When you shall have your kingdom in the East
I shall be still your slave, but you will love
The woman whom I know you are to love.

Nero.
What do you say? What woman?

Acte.
Otho knows.

NERO.
Otho ? And what should Otho know of love ?

ACTE.
He loves.

NERO.
Ay, surely, there is not a day
But Otho loves, and not a morrow morning
But Otho's out of love. My small bright bird,
My bird of Asia, come, I'll make for you
A song about my kingdom in the East
And Acte in a city of minarets
Under a palm-tree's shadow by a well.

ACTE.
Do not make songs about me : if you speak
It must be truth ; but songs are never true.

NERO.
I will put all the East into the song,
And this warm Asian heart, and all this white
And strange and supple and soft April flesh.
[*He walks up and down, not looking at her.*

ACTE.
He does not see me. Can it be that men
Forget the thing itself they think upon
With thinking on it ?

NERO.
"Little Asian heart . . ."

[*As he reaches the other end of the stage,* AGRIPPINA *enters, near where* ACTE *is. She looks at* ACTE, *and points scornfully to the door.* ACTE *bows submissively, and goes out, unseen by* NERO.

AGRIPPINA.
Nero!

NERO.
Ah, mother!

AGRIPPINA.
Is it a new song?
Or are your wits in labour of a speech
Seneca need not write for you?

NERO.
A song.
But was not Acte here?

AGRIPPINA.
Songs and a slave?
Is this my son, is this the King I made?
A King of slaves and songs!

NERO.
By your good leave,
A King able to stand alone, good mother.

AGRIPPINA.
Men mock your name already.

NERO.
Seneca
Or Pallas? When you gave me for a guide
The wisest man in the world, I learnt to go
To Seneca for wisdom. Did I do wrong?
He tells me that Apollo is a god,
And slaves are merely human.

AGRIPPINA.
He bears with you
That he may rule you.

NERO.
Do you bear with me,
Mother, if you would rule me!

AGRIPPINA.
Have I not
Borne you and must I bear with you? O my child,
Ask of me what you will, but cast away
These rags that shame your manhood in men's eyes.
Would you have my knees, must I beseech of you?

NERO.
Mother, you have given answer in my name
To magistrates and Kings; ambassadors
Have sued to you for audience; you have sat
On the level of my throne . . .

AGRIPPINA.
I gave it you.

NERO.
What you have given me, that I hold for mine,
Not to be held lightly, nor given back
Even to the giver. When you gave me power
You gave me power to use it.

AGRIPPINA.
Now I know
What manner of man-child is this, and why
His feet were so precipitate to be gone,
Even at the birth, and to have done with me.

NERO.
Mother, I am your son, I am the man
You made me.

AGRIPPINA.
What I have stooped to for your sake
I will not speak against you.

NERO.
Pallas speaks
More than is seemly. Pallas was a slave,
And had accounts to render : let him look to them.

AGRIPPINA.
What has not this man done for you, and done
For my sake ! Do you mock me from the throne
With how I thrust you to it ? I have pawned
My beauty, parcelled it, let out my wits

On leave to fools, down even to that crowned fool
Claudius, that was my husband : I have done all
For an ungrateful and unnatural son
Who gibes me from his footstool.

NERO.
Mother, not so.
Hear me . . .

AGRIPPINA.
When, yesterday, you sent me some
Certain rich jewels with a robe of state
Staled among empress' wardrobes, was it then
To rob me of the rest of them : all are mine,
For I have given you all !

NERO.
And all are yours :
Ask but the keeper of my treasury,
Claudius of Smyrna.

AGRIPPINA.
Pallas ?

NERO.
Swears himself
To-morrow out of office.

AGRIPPINA.
This is an end
Of peace between us : look on me no more
As on a mother, no, but as a judge

Betwixt a crowned usurper and the heir
To his dead father's kingdom. Britannicus
Was yesterday a child, to-day a man ;
What he shall be to-morrow I will not say ;
What he should be, who knows not ? I did well,
The just gods helping, to protect that life
Which now may right the empire.

NERO.
Will you not
Go to the camp, proclaim the boy, outswear
The gods, and cry " Germanicus " ?

AGRIPPINA.
Not in vain
Would I his daughter name Germanicus
To those brave hearts that loved him. Who would heed
Burrhus' unsworded stump, or hear the pale
Seneca's pedant tongue ?

NERO.
You speak the truth ;
You warn me, not too late ; nor I too soon,
Perhaps, have taken thought. For this I thank you.
To-night, after the feast, we'll talk again,
And you shall give me counsel. Until then
No word of discord, for we sup together,
And it were best seem friends. If we be so
It were the better.

AGRIPPINA.
Do you threaten me ?

II.

NERO.
So many years dead, and not quiet yet!
She wakes me, Tigellinus, many nights,
Comes to my bedside, rather like a mother
Than like an angry ghost, and kisses me
Down even to the bottom of a dream.

TIGELLINUS.
My lord, that's very well: she loves you still,
Or else the dead forget.

NERO.
If she forgot,
That were the best; but she remembers; why,
Her kisses are all hoarded from my lips,
And come again to plague me. Do you think
Some of the dead, that were not, as she was,
Immortally full of life, do these forget?

TIGELLINUS.
Surely, my lord.

NERO.
Octavia will not come.
She wept in dying, did she not?

TIGELLINUS.
Bitterly.

NERO.
She could not die for cold ; not all her veins
Had enough blood to die with. Now, I am sure
She will not wake again. Where is Poppæa ?

TIGELLINUS.
The Empress waits your orders.

NERO.
My entreaties,
Perhaps my knees.

TIGELLINUS.
She is very proud, my lord.

NERO.
You think so, Tigellinus ?

TIGELLINUS.
Aye, my lord.

NERO.
She has whipped you from her presence ?

TIGELLINUS.
No, my lord.

NERO.
Whipped you with words, crucified you with her eyes ?

TIGELLINUS.
Indeed no less, my lord.

NERO.
That's my brave lass !
It joys me even to think of it. Proud, you say ?
She shall be throned with Isis : I forget,
I spat upon her statue yesterday :
Throned over Isis. Were it not very well
That she should have a temple, like her child,
Having given a goddess birth ?

TIGELLINUS.
Give Rome, my lord,
A temple more, it counts a chariot-race,
Or half a play with blood in it.

NERO.
Dead, dead !

TIGELLINUS.
Who is dead, Cæsar ?

NERO.
Why should my child die
And my slave's brat grow up and be a whore ?
The gods forsake me : I am sick at heart ;
All that I love is snatched out of my heart.

From Villon.

No, I am not, as others are,
Child of the angels, with a wreath
Of planets or of any star.
My father's dead, and lies beneath
The churchyard stone : God rest his breath !
I know that my poor old mother
(And she too knows) must come to death,
And that her son must follow her.

I know that rich and poor and all,
Foolish and wise, and priest and lay,
Mean folk and noble, great and small,
High and low, fair and foul, and they
That wear rich clothing on the way,
Being of whatever stock or stem,
And are coiffed newly every day,
Death shall take every one of them.

Paris and Helen are both dead.
Whoever dies, dies with much pain ;
For when his wind and breath are sped
His gall breaks on his heart, and then
He sweats, God knows that sweat of men !
Then shall he pray against his doom
Child, brother, sister, all in vain :
None will be surety in his room.

Death makes him tremble and turn pale,
His veins stretch and his nose fall in,
His flesh grow moist and his neck swell,
Joints and nerves lengthen and wax thin ;
Body of woman, that hath been
Soft, tender, precious, smooth and even,
Must thou be spoiled in bone and skin ?
Yes, or else go alive to heaven.

From André Chénier : Elégies.

I.

Every man has his sorrows ; yet each still
Hides under a calm forehead his own ill.
Each pities but himself. Each in his grief
Envies his neighbour : he too seeks relief ;
For one man's pain is of no other known :
They hide their sorrows as he hides his own ;
And each, with tears and aching heart, can sigh :
All other men are happy, but not I.
They are unhappy all. They, desolate,
Cry against heaven and bid heaven change their fate.
Their fate is changed ; they soon, with fresh tears know
They have but changed one for another woe.

II.

A white nymph wandering in the woods by night
Spies a swift satyr, and pretends a flight ;
She runs, and running feigns to call him back !
The goat-foot, following on her flying track,
Falls down and flounders in a stagnant pool :
Whereat they, while he whimpers, mock the fool.

III.

Well, I would have it so. I should have known
How many times I made her will my own.
For once, at least, I should have let her be,
And waited, till I made her come to me.
No. I forget what fretful cries last night
Drove me to bitter silence and to flight ;
This morning, O weak easy heart, I long
To have her back, yet do her pride no wrong.

I fly to her, take all her wrongs, but she
Whom I would pardon will not pardon me.
I it is who am false, unjust, and seek
To show my horrid strength where she is weak.
And floods and tempest come, and tears that flow
Obediently, as she would have them go.
And I, to have some peace, must own defeat,
Kneel down, and take her pardon at her feet.

From Paul Verlaine : Fêtes Galantes.
I. Clair de Lune.

Your soul is a sealed garden, and there go
With masque and bergamasque fair companies
Playing on lutes and dancing and as though
Sad under their fantastic fripperies.

Though they in minor keys go carolling
Of love the conqueror and of life the boon
They seem to doubt the happiness they sing
And the song melts into the light of the moon,

The sad light of the moon, so lovely fair
That all the birds dream in the leafy shade
And the slim fountains sob into the air
Among the marble statues in the glade.

II. Pantomime.

Pierrot, no sentimental swain,
Washes a paté down again
With furtive flagons, white and red.

Cassandre, with demure content,
Greets with a tear of sentiment
His nephew disinherited.

That blackguard of a Harlequin
Pirouettes, and plots to win
His Columbine that flits and flies.

Columbine dreams, and starts to find
A sad heart sighing in the wind,
And in her heart a voice that sighs.

III. Sur l'Herbe.

The Abbé wanders.—Marquis, now
Set straight your periwig, and speak !
—This Cyprus wine is heavenly, how
Much less, Camargo, than your cheek !

—My goddess . . .—Do, mi, sol, la, si.
—Abbé, such treason who'll forgive you ?
—May I die, ladies, if there be
A star in heaven I will not give you !

—I'd be my lady's lapdog ; then . . .
—Shepherdess, kiss your shepherd soon,
Shepherd, come kiss . . . —Well, gentlemen ?
—Do, mi, so. —Hey, good-night, good moon !

IV. L'Allée.

As in the age of shepherd king and queen,
Painted and frail amid her nodding bows,
Under the sombre branches and between
The green and mossy garden-ways she goes,
With little mincing airs one keeps to pet
A darling and provoking perroquet.
Her long-trained robe is blue, the fan she holds
With fluent fingers girt with heavy rings,
So vaguely hints of vague erotic things
That her eye smiles, musing among its folds.
—Blonde too, a tiny nose, a rosy mouth,
Artful as that sly patch that makes more sly,
In her divine unconscious pride of youth,
The slightly simpering sparkle of the eye.

V. A la Promenade.

The sky so pale, and the trees, such frail things,
Seem as if smiling on our bright array
That flits so light and gay upon the way
With indolent airs and fluttering as of wings.

The fountain wrinkles under a faint wind,
And all the sifted sunlight falling through
The lime-trees of the shadowy avenue
Comes to us blue and shadowy-pale and thinned.

Faultlessly fickle, and yet fond enough,
With fond hearts not too tender to be free,
We wander whispering deliciously,
And every lover leads a lady-love,

Whose imperceptible and roguish hand
Darts now and then a dainty tap, the lip
Revenges on an extreme finger-tip,
The tip of the left little finger, and,

The deed being so excessive and uncouth,
A duly freezing look deals punishment,
That in the instant of the act is blent
With a shy pity pouting in the mouth.

VI. Dans la Grotte.

Stay, let me die, since I am true,
For my distress will not delay,
And the Hyrcanian tigress ravening for prey
Is as a little lamb to you.

Yes, here within, cruel Clymène,
This steel which in how many wars
How many a Cyrus slew, or Scipio, now prepares
To end my life and end my pain.

But nay, what need of steel have I
To haste my passage to the shades?
Did not Love pierce my heart, beyond all mortal aids,
With the first arrow of your eye?

VII. Les Ingénus.

High heels and long skirts intercepting them,
So that, according to the wind or way,
An ankle peeped and vanished as in play ;
And well we loved the malice of the game.

Sometimes an insect with its jealous sting
Some fair one's whiter neck disquieted,
From which the gleams of sudden whiteness shed
Met in our eyes a frolic welcoming.

The stealthy autumn evening faded out,
And the fair creatures dreaming by our side
Words of such subtle savour to us sighed
That since that time our souls tremble and doubt.

VIII. Cortège.

A silver-vested monkey trips
And pirouettes before the face
Of one who twists a kerchief's lace
Between her well-gloved finger-tips.

A little negro, a red elf,
Carries her drooping train, and holds
At arm's-length all the heavy folds,
Watching each fold displace itself.

The monkey never lets his eyes
Wander from the fair woman's breast,
White wonder that to be possessed
Would call a god out of the skies.

Sometimes the little negro seems
To lift his sumptuous burden up
Higher than need be, in the hope
Of seeing what all night he dreams.

She goes by corridor and stair,
Still to the insolent appeals
Of her familiar animals
Indifferent or unaware.

IX. Les Coquillages

Each shell incrusted in the grot
Where we two loved each other well
An aspect of its own has got.

The purple of a purple shell
Is our souls' colour when they make
Our burning heart's blood visible.

This pallid shell affects to take
Thy languors, when thy love-tired eyes
Rebuke me for my mockery's sake.

This counterfeits the harmonies
Of thy pink ear, and this might be
Thy plump short nape with rosy dyes.

But one, among these, troubled me.

X. En Patinant.

We were the victims, you and I,
Madame, of mutual self deceits ;
And that which set our brains awry
May well have been the summer heats.

And the spring too, if I recall,
Contributed to spoil our play,
And yet its share, I think, was small
In leading you and me astray.

For air in springtime is so fresh
That rose-buds Love has surely meant
To match the roses of the flesh
Have odours almost innocent ;

And even the lilies that outpour
Their biting odours where the sun
Is new in heaven, do but the more
Enliven and enlighten one,

So stealthily the zephyr blows
A mocking breath that renders back
The heart's rest and the soul's repose
And the flower's aphrodisiac,

And the five senses, peeping out,
Take up their station at the feast,
But, being by themselves, without
Troubling the reason in the least.

That was the time of azure skies,
(Madame, do you remember it ?)
And sonnets to my lady's eyes,
And cautious kisses not too sweet.

Free from all passion's idle pother,
Full of mere kindliness, how long,
How well we liked not loved each other,
Without one rapture or one wrong !

Ah, happy hours ! But summer came :
Farewell, fresh breezes of the spring !
A wind of pleasure like a flame
Leapt on our senses wondering.

Strange flowers, fair crimson-hearted flowers,
Poured their ripe odours over us,
And evil voices of the hours
Whispered above us in the boughs.

We yielded to it all, ah me !
What vertigo of fools held fast
Our senses in its ecstasy
Until the heat of summer passed ?

There were vain tears and vainer laughter,
And hands indefinitely pressed,
Moist sadnesses, and swoonings after,
And what vague void within the breast ?

But autumn came to our relief,
Its light grown cold, its gusts grown rough,
Came to remind us, sharp and brief,
That we had wantoned long enough,

And led us quickly to recover
The elegance demanded of
Every quite irreproachable lover
And every seemly lady-love.

Now it is winter, and, alas,
Our backers tremble for their stake ;
Already other sledges pass
And leave us toiling in their wake.

Put both your hands into your muff,
Sit back, now, steady ! off we go.
Fanchon will tell us soon enough
Whatever news there is to know.

XI. Fantoches.

Scaramouche waves a threatening hand
To Pulcinella, and they stand,
Two shadows, black against the moon.

The old doctor of Bologna pries
For simples with impassive eyes,
And mutters o'er a magic rune.

The while his daughter, scarce half-dressed,
Glides slyly 'neath the trees, in quest
Of her bold pirate lover's sail ;

Her pirate from the Spanish main,
Whose passion thrills her in the pain
Of the loud languorous nightingale.

XII. Cythère.

By favourable breezes fanned,
A trellised harbour is at hand
To shield us from the summer airs ;

The scent of roses, fainting sweet,
Afloat upon the summer heat,
Blends with the perfume that she wears.

True to the promise her eyes gave,
She ventures all, and her mouth rains
A dainty fever through my veins ;

And, Love fulfilling all things, save
Hunger, we 'scape, with sweets and ices,
The folly of Love's sacrifices.

XIII. En Bateau.

The shepherd's star with trembling glint
Drops in black water ; at the hint
The pilot fumbles for his flint.

Now is the time or never, sirs.
No hand that wanders wisely errs :
I touch a hand, and is it hers ?

The knightly Atys strikes the strings,
And to the faithless Chloris flings
A look that speaks of many things.

The abbé has absolved again
Eglé, the viscount all in vain
Has given his hasty heart the rein.

Meanwhile the moon is up and streams
Upon the skiff that flies and seems
To float upon a tide of dreams.

XIV. Le Faune.

An aged faun of old red clay
Laughs from the grassy bowling-green,
Foretelling doubtless some decay
Of mortal moments so serene

That lead us lightly on our way
(Love's piteous pilgrims have we been !)
To this last hour that runs away
Dancing to the tambourine.

XV. Mandoline.

The singers of serenades
Whisper their faded vows
Unto fair listening maids
Under the singing boughs.

Tircis, Aminte, are there,
Clitandre has waited long,
And Damis for many a fair
Tyrant makes many a song.

Their short vests, silken and bright,
Their long pale silken trains,
Their elegance of delight,
Twine soft blue silken chains.

And the mandolines and they,
Faintlier breathing, swoon
Into the rose and grey
Ecstasy of the moon.

XVI. A Clymène.

Mystical strains unheard,
A song without a word,
Dearest, because thine eyes,
Pale as the skies,

Because thy voice, remote
As the far clouds that float
Veiling for me the whole
Heaven of the soul,

Because the stately scent
Of thy swan's whiteness, blent
With the white lily's bloom
Of thy perfume,

Ah! because thy dear love,
The music breathed above
By angels halo-crowned,
Odour and sound,

Hath, in my subtle heart,
With some mysterious art
Transposed thy harmony,
So let it be!

XVII. Lettre.

Far from your sight removed by thankless cares
(The gods are witness when a lover swears)
I languish and I die, Madame, as still
My use is, which I punctually fulfil,
And go, through heavy-hearted woes conveyed,
Attended ever by your lovely shade,
By day in thought, by night in dreams of hell,
And day and night, Madame, adorable !
So that at length my dwindling body lost
In very soul, I too become a ghost,
I too, and in the lamentable stress
Of vain desires remembering happiness,
Remembered kisses, now, alas, unfelt,
My shadow shall into your shadow melt.

Meanwhile, dearest, your most obedient slave.

How does the sweet society behave,
Thy cat, thy dog, thy parrot ? and is she
Still, as of old, the black-eyed Silvanie
(I had loved black eyes if thine had not been blue)
Who ogled me at moments, palsambleu !
Thy tender friend and thy sweet confidant ?
One dream there is, Madame, long wont to haunt
This too impatient heart : to pour the earth
And all its treasures (of how little worth !)
Before your feet as tokens of a love
Equal to the most famous flames that move
The hearts of men to conquer all but death.

Cleopatra was less loved, yes, on my faith,
By Antony or Caesar than you are,
Madame, by me, who truly would by far
Out-do the deeds of Caesar for a smile,
O Cleopatra, queen of word and wile,
Or, for a kiss, take flight with Antony.

With this, farewell, dear, and no more from me ;
How can the time it takes to read it, quite
Be worth the trouble that it took to write ?

XVIII. Les Indolents.

Bah ! spite of Fate, that says us nay,
Suppose we die together, eh ?
—A rare conclusion you discover

—What's rare is good. Let us die so,
Like lovers in Boccaccio.
—Ha ! ha ! ha ! you fantastic lover !

—Nay, not fantastic. If you will,
Fond, surely irreproachable.
Suppose, then, that we die together ?

—Good sir, your jests are fitlier told
Than when you speak of love or gold.
Why speak at all, in this glad weather ?

Whereat, behold them once again,
Tircis beside his Dorimène,
Not far from two blithe rustic rovers,

For some caprice of idle breath
Deferring a delicious death.
Ha ! ha ! ha ! what fantastic lovers !

XIX. Colombine.

The foolish Leander,
Cape-covered Cassander,
And which
Is Pierrot? 'tis he
With the hop of a flea
Leaps the ditch;

And Harlequin who
Rehearses anew
His sly task,
With his dress that's a wonder,
And eyes shining under
His mask;

Mi, sol, mi, fa, do!
How gaily they go,
And they sing
And they laugh and they twirl
Round the feet of a girl
Like the Spring,

Whose eyes are as green
As a cat's are, and keen
As its claws,
And her eyes without frown
Bid all new-comers: Down
With your paws!

On they go with the force
Of the stars in their course,
And the speed :
O tell me toward what
Disaster unthought,
Without heed

The implacable fair,
A rose in her hair,
Holding up
Her skirts as she runs
Leads this dance of the dunce
And the dupe ?

XX. L'Amour par Terre.

The other night a sudden wind laid low
The Love, shooting an arrow at a mark,
In the mysterious corner of the park,
Whose smile disquieted us long ago.

The wind has overthrown him, and above
His scattered dust, how sad it is to spell
The artist's name still faintly visible
Upon the pedestal without its Love,

How sad it is to see the pedestal
Still standing ! as in dream I seem to hear
Prophetic voices whisper in my ear
The lonely and despairing end of all.

How sad it is ! Why, even you have found
A tear for it, although your frivolous eye
Laughs at the gold and purple butterfly
Poised on the piteous litter on the ground.

XXI. En Sourdine.

Calm where twilight leaves have stilled
With their shadow light and sound,
Let our silent love be filled
With a silence as profound.

Let our ravished senses blend
Heart and spirit, thine and mine,
With vague languors that descend
From the branches of the pine.

Close thine eyes against the day,
Fold thine arms across thy breast,
And for ever turn away
All desire of all but rest.

Let the lulling breaths that pass
In soft wrinkles at thy feet,
Tossing all the tawny grass,
This and only this repeat.

And when solemn evening
Dims the forest's dusky air,
Then the nightingale shall sing
The delight of our despair.

XXII. Colloque Sentimental.

In the old park, solitary and vast,
Over the frozen ground two forms once passed.

Their lips were languid and their eyes were dead,
And hardly could be heard the words they said.

In the old park, solitary and vast,
Two ghosts once met to summon up the past.

—Do you remember our old ecstasy ?
—Why would you bring it back again to me ?

—Do you still dream as you dreamed long ago ?
Does your heart beat to my heart's beating ?—No.

—Ah, those old days, what joys have those days seen
When your lips met my lips !—It may have been.

—How blue the sky was, and our hope how light !
—Hope has flown helpless back into the night.

They walked through weeds withered and grasses dead,
And only the night heard the words they said.

From Poèmes Saturniens.
I. Soleils Couchants.

Pale dawn delicately
Over earth has spun
The sad melancholy
Of the setting sun.
Sad melancholy
Brings oblivion
In sad songs to me
With the setting sun.
And the strangest dreams,
Dreams like suns that set
On the banks of the streams,
Ghost and glory met,
To my sense it seems,
Pass, and without let,
Like great suns that set
On the banks of streams.

II. Chanson d'Automne.

When a sighing begins
In the violins
Of the autumn-song,
My heart is drowned
In the slow sound
Languorous and long.

Pale as with pain,
Breath fails me when
The hour tolls deep.
My thoughts recover
The days that are over,
And I weep.

And I go
Where the winds know,
Broken and brief,
To and fro,
As the winds blow
A dead leaf.

III. Femme et Chatte.

They were at play, she and her cat,
And it was marvellous to mark
The white paw and the white hand pat
Each other in the deepening dark.

The stealthy little lady hid
Under her mittens' silken sheath
Her deadly agate nails that thrid
The silk-like dagger-points of death.

The cat purred primly and drew in
Her claws that were of steel filed thin :
The devil was in it all the same.

And in the boudoir, while a shout
Of laughter in the air rang out,
Four sparks of phosphor shone like flame.

From La Bonne Chanson.
I.

The white moon sits
And seems to brood
Where a swift voice flits
From each branch in the wood
That the tree-tops cover. . . .

O lover, my lover !

The pool in the meadows
Like a looking-glass
Casts back the shadows
That over it pass
Of the willow-bower. . . .

Let us dream : 'tis the hour. . . .

A tender and vast
Lull of content
Like a cloud is cast
From the firmament
Where one planet is bright. . . .

'Tis the hour of delight.

II.

The fireside, the lamp's little narrow light ;
The dream with head on hand, and the delight
Of eyes that lose themselves in loving looks ;
The hour of steaming tea and of shut books ;
The solace to know evening almost gone ;
The dainty weariness of waiting on
The nuptial shadow and night's softest bliss ;
Ah, it is this that without respite, this
That without stay, my tender fancy seeks,
Mad with the months and furious with the weeks.

From Romances sans Paroles.
I.

'Tis the ecstasy of repose,
'Tis love when tired lids close,
'Tis the wood's long shuddering
In the embrace of the wind,
'Tis, where grey boughs are thinned,
Little voices that sing.

O fresh and frail is the sound
That twitters above, around,
Like the sweet tiny sigh
That lies in the shaken grass ;
Or the sound when waters pass
And the pebbles shrink and cry.

What soul is this that complains
Over the sleeping plains,
And what is it that it saith ?
Is it mine, is it thine,
This lowly hymn I divine
In the warm night, low as a breath ?

II.

I divine, through the veil of a murmuring,
The subtle contour of voices gone,
And I see, in the glimmering lights that sing,
The promise, pale love, of a future dawn.

And my soul and my heart in trouble
What are they but an eye that sees,
As through a mist an eye sees double,
Airs forgotten of songs like these ?

O to die of no other dying,
Love, than this that computes the showers
Of old hours and of new hours flying :
O to die of the swing of the hours !

III.

Tears in my heart that weeps,
Like the rain upon the town.
What drowsy languor steeps
In tears my heart that weeps ?

O sweet sound of the rain
On earth and on the roofs !
For a heart's weary pain
O the song of the rain !

Vain tears, vain tears, my heart !
What, none hath done thee wrong ?
Tears without reason start
From my disheartened heart.

This is the weariest woe,
O heart, of love and hate
Too weary, not to know
Why thou hast all this woe.

IV.

A frail hand in the rose-grey evening
Kisses the shining keys that hardly stir,
While, with the light, small flutter of a wing,
And old song, like an old tired wanderer,
Goes very softly, as if trembling,
About the room long redolent of Her.

What lullaby is this that comes again
To dandle my poor being with its breath?
What wouldst thou have of me, gay laughing strain?
What hadst thou, desultory faint refrain
That now into the garden to thy death
Floatest through the half-opened window-pane?

V.

O sad, sad was my soul, alas !
For a woman, a woman's sake it was.

I have had no comfort since that day,
Although my heart went its way,

Although my heart and my soul went
From the woman into banishment.

I have had no comfort since that day,
Although my heart went its way.

And my heart, being sore in me,
Said to my soul : How can this be,

How can this be or have been thus,
This proud, sad banishment of us ?

My soul said to my heart : Do I
Know what snare we are tangled by,

Seeing that, banished, we know not whether
We are divided or together ?

VI.

Wearily the plain's
Endless length expands ;
The snow shines like grains
Of the shifting sands.

Light of day is none,
Brazen is the sky ;
Overhead the moon
Seems to live and die.

Where the woods are seen,
Grey the oak-trees lift
Through the vaporous screen
Like the clouds that drift.

Light of day is none,
Brazen is the sky ;
Overhead the moon
Seems to live and die.

Broken-winded crow,
And you, lean wolves, when
The sharp north-winds blow,
What do you do then ?

Wearily the plain's
Endless length expands ;
The snow shines like grains
Of the shifting sands.

VII.

There's a flight of green and red
In the hurry of hills and rails,
Through the shadowy twilight shed
By the lamps as daylight pales.

Dim gold light flushes to blood
In humble hollows far down ;
Birds sing low from a wood
Of barren trees without crown.

Scarcely more to be felt
Than that autumn is gone ;
Languors, lulled in me, melt
In the still air's monotone.

VIII. Spleen.

The roses were all red,
The ivy was all black :
Dear, if you turn your head,
All my despairs come back.

The sky was too blue, too kind,
The sea too green, and the air
Too calm : and I know in my mind
I shall wake and not find you there.

I am tired of the box-tree's shine
And the holly's, that never will pass,
And the plain's unending line,
And of all but you, alas !

IX. Streets.

Dance the jig !

I loved best her pretty eyes
Clearer than stars in any skies,
I loved her eyes for their dear lies.

Dance the jig !

And ah ! the ways, the ways she had
Of driving a poor lover mad :
It made a man's heart sad and glad.

Dance the jig !

But now I find the old kisses shed
From her flower-mouth a rarer red
Now that her heart to mine is dead.

Dance the jig !

And I recall, now I recall
Old days and hours, and ever shall,
And that is best, and best of all.

Dance the jig !

From Jadis et Naguère.
I. Art Poétique.

Music first and foremost of all !
Choose your measure of odd not even,
Let it melt in the air of heaven,
Pose not, poise not, but rise and fall.

Choose your words, but think not whether
Each to other of old belong :
What so dear as the dim grey song
Where clear and vague are joined together ?

'Tis veils of beauty for beautiful eyes,
'Tis the trembling light of the naked noon,
'Tis a medley of blue and gold, the moon
And stars in the cool of autumn skies.

Let every shape of its shade be born ;
Colour, away ! come to me, shade !
Only of shade can the marriage be made
Of dream with dream and of flute with horn.

Shun the Point, lest death with it come,
Unholy laughter and cruel wit
(For the eyes of the angels weep at it)
And all the garbage of scullery-scum.

Take Eloquence, and wring the neck of him !
You had better, by force, from time to time,
Put a little sense in the head of Rhyme :
If you watch him not, you will be at the beck of him.

O, who shall tell us the wrongs of Rhyme ?
What witless savage or what deaf boy
Has made for us this twopenny toy
Whose bells ring hollow and out of time ?

Music always and music still !
Let your verse be the wandering thing
That flutters in flight from a soul on the wing
Towards other skies at a new whim's will.

Let your verse be the luck of the lure
Afloat on the winds that at morning hint
Of the odours of thyme and the savour of mint . . .
And all the rest is literature.

II. Mezzetin Chantant.

Go, and with never a care
But the care to keep happiness !
Crumple a silken dress
And snatch a song in the air.

Hear the moral of all the wise
In a world where happy folly
Is wiser than melancholy :
Forget the hour as it flies !

The one thing needful on earth, it
Is not to be whimpering.
Is life after all a thing
Real enough to be worth it ?

From Sagesse.
I.

The little hands that once were mine,
The hands I loved, the lovely hands,
After the roadways and the strands,
And realms and kingdoms once divine,

And mortal loss of all that seems
Lost with the old sad pagan things,
Royal as in the days of kings
The dear hands open to me dreams.

Hands of dream, hands of holy flame
Upon my soul in blessing laid,
What is it that these hands have said
That my soul hears and swoons to them?

Is it a phantom, this pure sight
Of mother's love made tenderer,
Of spirit with spirit linked to share
The mutual kinship of delight?

Good sorrow, dear remorse, and ye,
Blest dreams, O hands ordained of heaven
To tell me if I am forgiven,
Make but the sign that pardons me!

II.

O my God, thou hast wounded me with love,
Behold the wound, that is still vibrating,
O my God, thou hast wounded me with love.

O my God, thy fear hath fallen upon me,
Behold the burn is there, and it throbs aloud,
O my God, thy fear hath fallen upon me.

O my God, I have known that all is vile
And that thy glory hath stationed itself in me,
O my God, I have known that all is vile.

Drown my soul in floods, floods of thy wine,
Mingle my life with the body of thy bread,
Drown my soul in floods, floods of thy wine.

Take my blood, that I have not poured out,
Take my flesh, unworthy of suffering,
Take my blood, that I have not poured out.

Take my brow, that has only learned to blush,
To be the footstool of thine adorable feet,
Take my brow, that has only learned to blush.

Take my hands, because they have laboured not
For coals of fire and for rare frankincense,
Take my hands, because they have laboured not.

Take my heart, that has beaten for vain things,
To throb under the thorns of Calvary,
Take my heart, that has beaten for vain things.

Take my feet, frivolous travellers,
That they may run to the crying of thy grace,
Take my feet, frivolous travellers.

Take my voice, a harsh and a lying noise,
For the reproaches of thy Penitence,
Take my voice, a harsh and a lying noise.

Take mine eyes, luminaries of deceit,
That they may be extinguished in the tears of prayer,
Take mine eyes, luminaries of deceit.

Alas, thou, God of pardon and promises,
What is the pit of mine ingratitude,
Alas, thou, God of pardon and promises.

God of terror and God of holiness,
Alas, my sinfulness is a black abyss,
God of terror and God of holiness.

Thou, God of peace, of joy and delight,
All my tears, all my ignorances,
Thou, God of peace, of joy and delight.

Thou, O God, knowest all this, all this,
How poor I am, poorer than any man,
Thou, O God, knowest all this, all this.

And what I have, my God, I give to thee.

III.

Slumber dark and deep
Falls across my life ;
I will put to sleep
Hope, desire, and strife.

All things pass away,
Good and evil seem
To my soul to-day
Nothing but a dream ;

I a cradle laid
In a hollow cave,
By a great hand swayed:
Silence, like the grave.

IV.

The body's sadness and the languor thereof
Melt and bow me with pity till I could weep,
Ah ! when the dark hours break it down in sleep
And the bedclothes score the skin and the hot hands move ;
Alert for a little with the fever of day,
Damp still with the heavy sweat of the night that has thinned,
Like a bird that trembles on a roof in the wind :
And the feet that are sorrowful because of the way,

And the breast that a hand has scarred with a double blow,
And the mouth that as an open wound is red,
And the flesh that shivers and is a painted show,
And the eyes, poor eyes so lovely with tears unshed
For the sorrow of seeing this also over and done :
Sad body, how weak and how punished under the sun !

V.

Fairer is the sea
Than the minster high,
Faithful nurse is she,
And last lullaby,
And the Virgin prays
Over the sea's ways.

Gifts of grief and guerdons
From her bounty come,
And I hear her pardons
Chide her angers home ;
Nothing in her is
Unforgivingness.

She is piteous,
She the perilous !
Friendly things to us
The wave sings to us :
You whose hope is past,
Here is peace at last.

And beneath the skies,
Brighter-hued than they,
She has azure dyes,
Rose and green and grey.
Better is the sea
Than all fair things or we.

From Parallèlement : Impression Fausse.

Little lady mouse,
Black upon the grey of light ;
Little lady mouse,
Grey upon the night.

Now they ring the bell,
All good prisoners slumber deep ;
Now they ring the bell,
Nothing now but sleep.

Only pleasant dreams,
Love's enough for thinking of ;
Only pleasant dreams,
Long live love !

Moonlight over all,
Someone snoring heavily ;
Moonlight over all
In reality.

Now there comes a cloud,
It is dark as midnight here ;
Now there comes a cloud,
Dawn begins to peer.

Little lady mouse,
Rosy in a ray of blue,
Little lady mouse :
Up now, all of you !

From Chansons pour Elle.

You believe that there may be
Luck in strangers in the tea :
I believe only in your eyes.

You believe in fairy-tales,
Days one wins and days one fails :
I believe only in your lies.

You believe in heavenly powers,
In some saint to whom one prays
Or in some Ave that one says.

I believe only in the hours,
Coloured with the rosy lights
You rain for me on sleepless nights.

And so firmly I receive
These for truth, that I believe
That only for your sake I live.

From Epigrammes.

When we go together, if I may see her again,
Into the dark wood and the rain ;

When we are drunken with air and the sun's delight
At the brink of the river of light ;

When we are homeless at last, for a moment's space
Without city or abiding-place ;

And if the slow good-will of the world still seem
To cradle us in a dream ;

Then, let us sleep the last sleep with no leave-taking,
And God will see to the waking.

From Catullus : Chiefly concerning Lesbia. I.

I liken him unto a god,
Or if so be it a higher thing,
Who sits and gazes on thy face,
Looking and listening

To thy sweet laughter. Whereas I,
With senses ravished if I come
So near as to behold thy face,
Swoon, and my tongue is numb,

And a thin fire through all my limbs
Races, and both my ears are stopped
With a great sound that rings, and dark
Is upon daylight dropped.

But thou, Catullus, know that ease
Wrongs thee : put off thy idleness.
Older and happier states and kings
Have perished for no less.

II.

Sparrow, darling of my dear,
She will play with you, and hide you
In her bosom, and confide you
Her forefinger without fear.
Nay, will tease you till you bite,
When it pleases her, my bright
Shining lady of delight,
With some dear thing to be playing.
That (if I her sense discover)
Love's full ardours being over,
She may find some after-staying
Of the heart-ache : would that I
Might play with you like her, and part
With all the sorrows of my heart.

III.

Graces, let your tears be shed,
Loves, and mortals lovelier,
For my lady's sparrow dead,
The dead darling of my dear,
Dearer than her eyes to her ;
He was sweet as the honey-cell,
And his mistress he knew well
As a girl her very mother.
In her breast he would nest,
Hopping there and hopping here,
He would pipe unto no other,
Who now goes the darksome way :
Whence none come again, they say.
But on you, ye shades of night,
All fair things in darkness steeping,
Curses ! you have snatched away
A lovely sparrow, my delight,
Hapless sparrow ! from my keeping.
Through you my lady's eyes of light
Are heavy now and red with weeping.

V.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love :
Old men's sayings are for old men wise enough :
Give them a farthing for the price of the stuff.
Suns may set and suns upon earth arise :
As for us, when for us the brief light dies,
There is only night, and an everlasting sleeping.
Give me a thousand kisses, then ; be heaping
A hundred upon a thousand, then a second hundred
Upon another thousand, and another hundred ;
Then, when the number has up to a myriad mounted,
Let us lose the reckoning, lest our love should be counted,
And we or another envying us should guess
How many kisses make up our happiness.

XCII.

Lesbia speaks nothing but evil about me, they say.
Well, what of that ? May I perish if love does not move her.
What is the proof ? That I backbite Lesbia all day
Myself : may I perish, gods ! if I do not love her.

VII.

What, Lesbia, can you ask if any
Kisses of yours could be too many ?
How many are the sands that lie
All perfume to the Libyan sky,
From where old Battus' ashes dwell
To Jove's parched desert oracle ?
How many a star unsleeping hovers,
On still nights, over stealthy lovers ?
Shall kisses such as all or any
For your mad lover be too many ?
O let no count of envy reach them,
Nor no wicked tongue bewitch them.

XIII.

You shall sup with me, Fabullus, if all is well, you
Shall sup with me like a prince ; but let me tell you
That you'll have to bring the wherewithal of the feast
And the wine and the salt and a girl or two at least,
And laughter for every man in the lees of the cup.
These, if you bring, as I say, dear fellow, we'll sup
Like princes ; but Catullus' lean purse is lined
With nothing, alas, but spider's webs, you'll find.
Yet take in return love's very honey of love,
Or, if love itself be not dainty and sweet enough,
I will give you some perfume here in the house already,
For the Loves and the Graces gave it to my lady ;
When that you have only breathed I can hear you cry :
" Make me all nose, O gods, or let me die ! "

XLIII.

Hail, although of nose not neat,
Black of eyes nor trim of feet,
Long of fingers, dry of mouth,
Nor too dainty-tongued, forsooth,
Mistress of no better man
Than a bankrupt Formian.
Does your province not declare you
Beautiful ? and even compare you
With my Lesbia ? O disgraced
Age, incapable of taste !

LXXXVI.

Quintia is beautiful, many will tell you : to me
She is white, she is straight, she is tall : to all this I agree,
But does this make her beautiful ? though she be found without fault,
Can you find in the whole of her body the least pinch of salt ?
But Lesbia is beautiful : hers is the secret alone
To steal from all beauty its beauty, and make it her own.

LXXXIII.

When her husband is with us Lesbia speaks harshly to me,
Whereat the fool of a man is filled to the brim with glee.
Ass, don't you see? were she silent, and could she forget all about me
Then were she heart-whole to you; but, now to nag and flout me
Isn't to merely remember; but what is the worst of the lot,
She is angry, and that is a sign she is burning and boiling hot.

XLVIII.

Your honeyed eyes, Juventius,
If you would let one kiss,
Three hundred thousand would to us
Seem nothing much amiss :
Could all earth's ears of corn eclipse
That heavenly harvest of the lips ?

CIV.

What, I speak evil ? I never can speak well enough of her,
My life, who is dearer to me than the sight of my eyes.
I could not ; nor would, if I could not but be so in love with her :
But Tappo and you make such monsters of minikin lies.

XCVI.

If living sorrows any boon
Unto the silent grave can give
When sad remembrances revive
Old loves and friendships fugitive,
She sorrows less she died so soon
Than joys your love is still alive.

CI.

Wandering many waters and many lands,
I come, my brother, to do sad rites as of old ;
See, I bring you the death-gift in my hands,
Hear, I speak to you, speak to the ashes cold.
All that fortune has left me in place of you,
Alas, poor brother, bereft of innocent breath !
Yet, as our sires before us have done, I do,
I bring the same sad gifts, an offering for death.
Take them, that they of a brother's tears may tell ;
And now for all time, brother, hail and farewell.

LXX.

A woman says that no wooer but I could move her ;
Not Jove, if he came a-wooing, would be to her mind.
She says it : but let what a woman says to her lover
Be written in running water and told to the wind.

LXXXV.

I hate and I love : you ask me how one can do it ?
I know not : I know that it hurts : I am going through it.

XXVII.

No weak wine shall wet the lip :
Fill a stronger bowl for her,
Drunken as a drunken pip,
Who's our Lady lawgiver.
Water, plague of wine, avaunt
To some stoic-bellied haunt ;
Bacchus' brew is all we want.

CVII.

If a wished-for thing and a thing past hoping for
Should come to a man, will he welcome it not the more?
Therefore to me more welcome it is than gold
That Lesbia brings me back my desire of old,
My desire past hoping for, her own self, back.
O mark the day with white in the almanac!
What happier man is alive, or what can bring
To a man, whoever he be, a more wished-for thing?

CIX.

This pleasant love, my life, between us two,
You promise me shall be perpetual.
Great gods, take thought to keep her promise true,
First on the lips, but inly most of all ;
And grant how long soever our lives run
This holy bond of friendship shall go on.

LXXXII.

Friend, would you have Catullus's eyes in debt,
Or whatever is dearer to him than his eyes ?
Seek not to take from him that which is dearer yet
Than his eyes, or whatever is dearer to him than his eyes.

LXXIII.

Cease to do good to any man, or be
The thought to find him grateful, far from thee.
All men are thankless : none a favour takes
But of the gift a grief and burden makes.
I find no claws so sharp to turn and rend
As his who was my one and only friend.

LXXII.

Lesbia, you swore to me once you were known, save Catullus, of no man,
Not for a God out of heaven would the bond of your love be forgot :
Then was my love for you not as a man's mere love for a woman
But as a father's love for children himself has begot.
Now, I know you ; and now, though I burn for you still past all reason,
Somewhat lighter a thing and cheaper a thing you seem.
How can that be ? do you ask. Because to a lover such treason
Wakes in the heart desire, kills in the soul esteem.

LX.

Who gave you birth ? a Libyan lioness
Or Scylla barking from her nether womb ?
That thus you mock a suppliant in distress
Who cries to you from off the edge of doom ?
O entire monster of hard-heartedness !

LXXVI.

If there is any pleasure to any man in the thought
He has been pious to men, truly a friend to a friend,
Broken no sacred pledges, nor in no compact sought
To take the name of the gods in vain for a treacherous end,
Joys enough for a lifetime you shall earn, if any can,
Catullus, out of the love given you back by none ;
For whatever a man can do or say for a man,
Surely that you have said, surely that you have done.
This was all of it lent to a thankless heart, and is lost :
Why are you sorry at all or troubled in mind for this ?
Set your soul firm ; withdraw yourself from out of his coast ;
Why seek grief for yourself, as if of the gods it is ?
Hard it is to put by of a sudden a love grown strong,
Hard, it is, but a gain indeed that has to be got :
This is the one safe way, although the way may be long,
This you have got to do, whether you can or not.
Gods, if pity is yours, or if ever ye gave
Grace to a wretch that lay in the very moment of death,
Look on me in my anguish, and give release, if I have
Purely lived in my life, from this plague of pestilent breath.
Ah ! this torpor that creeps like a poison from vein to vein
Every joy that was once a joy from my heart has chased :
Now I ask no longer that she should love me again,
Or, what never could be, that she would choose to be chaste.
Let me be well again, and from this foul malady free :
Render to me, O gods, the reward of piety.

LXXXVII.

No woman could say that a man had loved her better
Than I, my Lesbia, have loved you, my loveliest.
There was never a bond more strictly kept to the letter
Than the bond I made that you should be loved the best.
Now is my mind so distracted by what they tell of you,
So lost in allegiance to your unworthiness,
If you came to be honest again I could never think well of you,
But do what you would, I never could love you less.

LVIII.

Caelius, Lesbia mine, that Lesbia, that
Lesbia whom Catullus for love did rate
Higher than all himself and than all things, stands
Now at the cross-roads and the alleys, to wait
For the lords of Rome, with public lips and hands.

VIII.

Miserable Catullus, put an end of this folly :
Let all things dead be over and ended wholly.
Once the sun was bright and the light was fair,
And there was a woman to love, and she waited there,
And never a woman was better loved than she.
Surely the sun was bright and fair to see,
And merrily then the hours of love went by
When nothing that you desired would she deny.
Now the woman, desiring no more, denies :
You too, deny, nor follow her as she flies.
Be miserable no more, for all is vain :
Set your soul steadfast and harden your heart again.
Farewell : Catullus has hardened his heart again,
He will not follow nor cry to you now in vain.
No, it is you that shall weep, as you lie alone,
And no man cries at your gate, and the night goes on.
What shall remain to you then ? who shall come to your call ?
Who shall call you fair ? nay, whom shall you love at all ?
Who shall have you for his ? whose lips shall you bite and kiss ?
But you, Catullus, harden your heart at this.

LXIII. Attis.

Over ocean Attis sailing in a swift ship charioted
When he reached the Phrygian forests, and with rash foot violently
Trod the dark and shadowy regions of the goddess, wood-garlanded,
And with ravening madness ravished, and his reason abandoning him,
Seized a pointed flint and sundered from his flesh his virility.
Then in all his limbs realising his manhood irrevocable,
Seeing earth with blood besprinkled, with fresh blood, the blood of him,
In his snow-white hands he snatches the light tambourine suddenly,
Tambourine that thou, Cybele, madest, mother, for thy mysteries,
And, between his tender fingers the hide's hollow agitating,
Stricken through with trembling shudders, thus sings to his companions :
"Corybantes, all together, up, on to the woods of Cybele ;
All together, on, ye wandering herds of Dindymus' shepherdess,
Ye that seeking foreign shores, and, in an exile voluntary,
Following me and guided by me, on my ways my companions,
Having overcome the rapid main and the floods' savagery,
And in passing hate of Venus having overcome the man in you,
Now your mistress' heart gladden ye with the speed of courses precipitate.
Slow delay be cast behind you, follow all together, follow me,

To the Phrygian home of Cybele, Phrygian woods, the goddess's,
Where the cymbals utter their voices to the tambourines echoing,
Where the curved reed makes grave music for the Phrygian flute-player,
Where the Maenads toss together wild heads ivy-filleted,
Where with piercing ululations the sacred signs are agitated,
Where in wonted wake the wandering cohort follows the deity,
Thither meet it is we hasten, thither with dances swift-footed."
Scarcely had the would-be woman Attis ceased to his followers
When at once the Corybantes shrieked, and their tongues palpitated,
And their tambourines re-bellowed, and their cymbals crackled hollowly,
And the chorus swiftly leaping rushed towards Ida's summits verdurous.
Whereat Attis, raging, wavering, goes unsteadily, breath forsaking him,
Tambourining through the dark woods the tumultuous company,
As, the yoke's weight shouldered off it, surges the heifer untamable.
Him their leader all the Bacchantes follow with feet precipitate ;
But no sooner Cybele's threshold touched, together languorously
Fall in sleep, tired out with journeying, and without Cere's sustenance.
Sluggish slumber shuts their eyelids in a languor hesitating,
From their souls the raging madness passes away in quietude.

But, when the golden-visaged sun with bright eyes illuminated
Cloudless ether and the solid earth and ocean tumultuous,
And with sounding hoofs of morning trampled night's shadows away,
Then did Sleep with flying footsteps remove from Attis awakening
And divine Pasithea took him back to her bosom tremulous.
Then awakening out of quiet suddenly without delirium
All at once his deed returning comes again to his memory,
And himself he sees, and where, and without what now abidingly,
And with mind at ebb and flow he turns him seaward and, surveying it,
All the mighty vast of ocean, through eyes weeping incessantly,
He his fatherland addresses with sad cryings dejectedly :
" Fatherland, O my mother ! fatherland the begetter of me,
Have I, wretch above all wretched, cast thee off as a runagate
Slave his master, and on Ida sought these groves, this icy dwelling-place
Of the snow and savage region of the wild beasts' sovereignty ?
Where, O where and in what region shall my thoughts imagine thee, fatherland ?
Still the light within my eyelids longs for thee, turning thitherward,
When my mind a little season scatters these pangs ravaging me.
Am I then condemned for ever to these distant woods, abandoning

Fatherland and friends and chattels and the forefathers of me,
These abandoning, forum, race-course, wrestling-place, and gymnasium ?
Miserable, ah miserable soul lamenting herself perpetually !
For what form of bodily feature is there that I had it not ?
I a woman ! I adolescent, I a stripling, I all but a man,
I the seemliest at the wrestling, at the gymnasium I the flower of them ?
Once my doors were thronged, my thresholds warm with footprints uncountable,
Once my dwelling was with flowery wreaths and tokens engarlanded,
When I used to leave my chamber, and the rising sun arose with me.
I a priestess of the gods now, and a waiting-woman of Cybele ?
I a Maenad, I this remnant left of a man emasculate ?
I inhabit the cold green places, Ida's summit snow-garmented ?
I beneath the heights of Phrygian mountains scatter my life away,
Where the woodland-haunting hind is and the wild-boar wood-wandering ?
Now, now the deed I sorrow for ; now, now I repent of it."
Scarcely from the rosy lips the sound had gone and, flitting rapidly
To both the ears of the gods the new rumour communicated,
When the lions from the traces of her chariot-yoke unharnessing
Cybele thus spake, and stung with words the left flock-terrifier :

"Go," she cries, "and with the fury of thy going, my fierce minister,
Let a madness harry, a madness drive him to my wood-fastnesses
Who desires to be delivered from my intolerable slavery.
Go thou, beat thy flanks with thy tail, and endure thy own blows lashing thee,
Roar, roar till all the region round resounds with thy bellowing,
Toss they brawny neck and toss abroad they fierce mane rutilant."
Thus spake the pitiless goddess, with her hands the yoke untrammelling.
Whereat, loosed, the beast to swiftness in his fury lashing himself,
Rushes, roars, and breaks the thickets all in pieces with his galloping.
Then he, coming to the sea-wet margin where the foam whitens it,
Seeing there the tender Attis, where the flood curdles luminous,
Rushes on him : he in terror flies, the savage woods envelop him ;
Who his whole life long inhabits them, the goddess's waiting-woman.
Goddess, mighty goddess, Cybele, lady goddess of Dindymus,
Keep, mistress, all thy fury far, far from my dwelling-place,
Others urge thou headlong, others with thy madness intoxicate.

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